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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [UNMIK](#) [YI](#)

SUBJECT: KOSOVO: SCENESETTER FOR SEPTEMBER 13-14 VISIT OF
DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY ROSEMARY DICARLO

Classified By: COM Tina S. Kaidanow for reasons 1.4 (B) and (D).

¶1. (C) SUMMARY: With the Unity Team still fractious and a growing tide of public criticism against the decentralization provisions of the UNOSEK plan, we are anticipating a rough political season in advance of the eventual status decision. What would normally have been a heated debate over the merits of decentralization has been deliberately -- and successfully -- stoked by LDK party presidential hopeful Nexhat Daci, whose anti-international theme meshes well with the disgruntlement of local LDK leaders over the loss of municipal territory to new Serb carve-outs. Municipal protests in key towns have had large-scale and cross-party participation, egged on by Daci supporters. The Unity Team, in typical feckless fashion, has been unable to counter accusations of "enclavizing" Kosovo, and the field has largely been left to voices that argue against a measured approach to status and the negotiating process. Your visit here will help reinforce to the Kosovar public that decentralization is a necessary and positive step towards status and that the entire spectrum of Kosovar leadership -- party, assembly, and municipal authorities -- will need to take responsibility for bringing the status process to a successful close. Unity Team members, feeling beleaguered, will also welcome your vision for the next few months and the message that the U.S. is committed to pushing the status process through. And finally, a firm injunction to UNMIK and OSCE that they must finish their planning for a rapid post-status transition will help spur action in an otherwise torpid work environment. End summary.

Anxiety, Anger Grows on Decentralization

¶2. (C) We would have expected a backlash on the concept of decentralization and the establishment of new Serb-majority municipalities in almost any case once the UNOSEK negotiations reached their denouement. Tensions, however, have been deliberately heightened on this issue by LDK presidential challenger Daci, whose clever manipulation of nationalist themes coincides nicely with municipal leaders' anger over the loss of territory to new Serb areas. Local LDK leaders in Viti, Gjilan and elsewhere in eastern and central Kosovo have eagerly espoused the Daci cause in opposition to Kosovo President (and Unity Team member) Fatmir

Sejdiu, who declared himself a candidate for the LDK presidency this past week in an effort to stave off the disastrous prospect of a Daci win. Most analysts predict an eventual Sejdiu victory over Daci (though it will by no means be a cakewalk, and Sejdiu's ability to campaign has been severely restricted by UNMIK for constitutional reasons), but the vicious quality of the campaign will make it harder for the Unity Team to agree on further concessions in Vienna and will widen the existing faultlines among the Albanian negotiators. Yellow press coverage of the decentralization debate also adds to the prospect that an already anarchic Kosovo Assembly will vote down key provisions of the Ahtissari plan once they are put into draft legal form. Assembly caucus heads should hear an unequivocal message from you that the USG will brook no dissent in passing through both standards- and settlement-related legislation, and that they will be held personally accountable for this.

Unity Team Feeling Beset, Adrift

13. (C) The rising drumbeat of attack against the Unity Team's negotiating efforts has demoralized even the team's most enthusiastic members (including Blerim Shala) in recent days, as has a sense of drift (at least in the team's perception) in the UNOSEK-sponsored talks. Uncertainty over Ahtisaari's final demands, particularly on Mitrovica and vertical links between Kosovo Serb municipalities and Belgrade, is fueling their unease, as are rumors that the status process could be delayed or put off indefinitely. What reassurance you can give them on timing and forward movement will help reenergize team members, though they should be left under no illusion that it remains squarely on their shoulders to close remaining gaps with UNOSEK and make

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their case on decentralization to the wider Kosovar audience.

You should also begin to prepare them for the idea that cross-party unity will need to be maintained beyond status day (Thaci and Surroi have repeatedly claimed that the day after status, the Team will cease to exist); among other things, constitution drafting and elections timing will require inter-party consensus in order to avoid a massive political crisis at the very outset of the post-status period.

UNMIK, OSCE Paralyzed on Transition Planning

14. (C) Despite repeated assurances that detailed planning documents will be forthcoming shortly, we have seen no real sign that UNMIK is prepared to launch a full-scale transition effort in the next weeks. UNMIK SRSG Ruecker will be in New York with Prime Minister Ceku for a Security Council appearance, but you and your EU colleague should set down with PDSRSG Schook a firm deadline for the UNMIK transition plan and counter any lingering hope at UNMIK or at the OSCE that more than three months will be allotted for the handover. You will also have a chance to hear from the head of the EU Rule of Law team, who has steadily pursued his planning mission but is hampered by an inchoate set of demands from EU capitals to make the ROL mission "more robust" without a corresponding pledge of enhanced resources.

Transition issues will take up an increasing amount of our time and energy over the next months; in some instances, Kosovo's economic stability could be imperiled if adequate attention is not paid to the future structure and function of key agencies now underpinned (if loosely) by UNMIK authority.

Kosovo's North

15. (C) You will have a chance to travel to north Mitrovica and Zvecan municipality and speak with mayors and other Serbs, including students, about U.S. hopes for northern Kosovo. We have successfully raised our profile in the north in recent weeks as a function of intensified political engagement, as well as USAID-sponsored small infrastructure projects that will get underway this month and next.

Northern Serb leaders profess to want open communication channels with us, but they have given no ground on the independence issue; you can continue to underscore that we have every intention of assisting Serbs in the north and elsewhere, but any post-status move to isolate northern Kosovo will be to the detriment of the Serb population and will be opposed by the international community. Press opportunities will offer you the chance to indicate our strong support for decentralization to the Kosovo Serb audience.

Comment

¶6. (C) We look forward to your coming, not least because you are the first USG visitor in many weeks to have a vision to share that will help steer a fragile and underwhelming Kosovar leadership through the tricky pre-status shoals. Using the leverage of direct Washington interest, we will use this visit to hammer home the unity theme with party leaders and press them for full agreement with UNOSEK; bring obstructionist Albanian legislators to heel; send an inclusive but determined signal to Serb opinion makers in the North; and leave UNMIK under no doubt that they must produce transition plans now. These are all critical objectives in the run-up to the status decision, ones that, if carefully managed, will help make the outcome stable and sustainable for the long term.

¶7. (U) U.S. Office Pristina does not/not clear this cable for release to U.N. Special Envoy for Kosovo Martti Ahtisaari.
KAIDANOW